16
薫る花は凛と咲く
三香見サカ
SHONEN MAGAZINE COMICS

Chapter 118: Unequal Blessings

...!
...?
IT'S INCREDIBLY TASTY!
RIGHT?
Y- YEAH...
REALLY? THAT'S A RELIEF!
EVERY SINGLE SLICE IS BREATHTAKINGLY BEAUTIFUL, AND SIMPLY A TREAT TO LOOK AT...
HER LOVE FOR CAKE IS SHINING THROUGH...
YOU SURE KNOW HOW TO MAKE ME HAPPY.
I CAN TELL YOU MUST LOVE CAKES.
WE SHARE MUTUAL FEELINGS.
AND HOW GRATEFUL I AM.

...REWARDING ME WITH THEIR SMILES AND IMPRESSIONS.

I AM BLESSED WITH ALL THESE CUSTO-MERS...

BUT THAT IS ALSO WHY...

...YOU STUCK OUT TO ME AMID THAT.

IT HAS BEEN QUITE SOME TIME SINCE I'D FELT THAT HAPPY...

HAVING SOMEONE STARE AT MY WORK WITH SUCH FRUSTRATION ON THEIR FACE.

I HAVE TO ADMIT...

...!

AND SO, I JUST COULDN'T STOP MYSELF FROM APPROACHING YOU.

Apologies if I scared you.

AH, OF COURSE!

Sorry to interrupt your conversation.

DO YOU HAVE A MOMENT?

CHEF!

M...

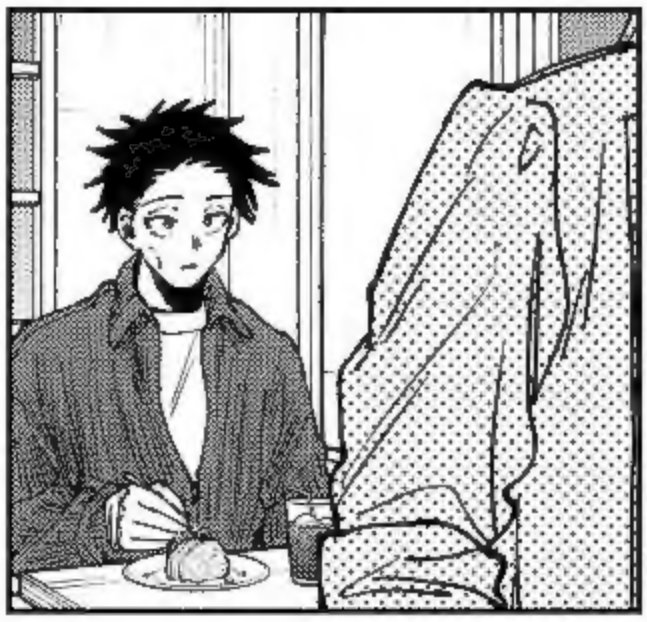
HA HA HA... FORGIVE ME.

MURMUR

MURMUR!

MURMUR

WHY IN THE WORLD ARE YOU SLIPPING OUT OF THE KITCHEN DURING SUCH A BUSY TIME?!



THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

AND PLEASE ENJOY MORE OF OUR CAKES.

ANYWAY, I WISH YOU TWO A PLEASANT TIME.

Y- YEAH...

DIDN'T THINK I'D RUN INTO HIM LIKE THIS, THOUGH.

COULD IT BE... THAT HE'S THE PERSON YOU ONCE TOLD US ABOUT?

MUNCH もぐ

もぐ MUNCH

Haha...

WELL... I WAS TOO NERVOUS TO EVEN SAY A WORD, THOUGH.

THANKS ...

I'M HAPPY FOR YOU.

HM?

WHY THIS PLACE HAD SUCH AN IMPACT ON YOU BACK THEN.

I CAN UNDER-STAND...

...AND TRYING OUT THEIR CAKES...

COMING HERE...

I CAN FEEL THEM...

...GIVING ME THE STRENGTH TO KEEP GOING!

THAT'S THE KIND OF TASTE THEY HAVE!

WHEN YOU LAST VISITED... WAS HE ACTING AS CHEERFUL AS HE IS NOW?

...YEAH.

I SEE.

THAT'S IMPRES-SIVE.

DESPITE ALL THESE YEARS...

...HE HASN'T CHANGED ONE BIT.

...THAT'S TRUE.

W-Well!

I'M SURE HE MUST HAVE EXPERIENCED PLENTY OF HARDSHIPS DURING THESE YEARS!

As well as your parents!

...

That was delicious!

WHAT A FEAST!

Would you mind?

I wanna try some, too!

SO THAT THEY COULD ALL TRY THEM OUT.

I WAS TASKED TO BRING A FEW SLICES OF CAKE WITH ME...

I see.

SURE. TAKE-OUT FOR YOUR FAMILY?

ACTUALLY, CAN I BUY SOMETHING ELSE?

YUP!

Now, what should I get...?

Her face is making it rather obvious.

THOUGH I BET SHE'S ALSO GOING TO BUY SOME MORE FOR HERSELF, TOO.

...

I'D RATHER NOT STAY IN THE WAY OF THE LINE...

SO I'LL BE WAITING OVER HERE.

OKAY!

...

THAT'S JUST WHO SHE IS, AFTER ALL.

...MUST HAVE BROUGHT THIS TO LIFE.

HIS WORK...

...AND HIS CAKES...

THIS VIEW...

HE'S... SIMPLY AMAZING...

!

!

?

?!

WAIT A SECOND!

BUT... ARE YOU SURE YOU SHOULD BE TALKING WITH ME RIGHT NOW?

Y-YES, I WAS JUST WAITING FOR HER...

How glad I am!

BUT IT SEEMS LIKE... THAT GIRL IS OFF TO BUY SOME MORE OF OUR CAKES, YES?

Phew...

I WAS WORRIED YOU'D LEFT BY NOW.

HE'S JUST BEGGING FOR ANOTHER SCOLDING...

A short break won't hurt

HA HA HA FORGIVE ME.

WHY IN THE WORLD ARE YOU SLIPPING OUT OF THE KITCHEN DURING SUCH A BUSY TIME?

HM? WHY?

OH, RIGHT!

I MEAN, BEFORE...

NOT TO MEN-TION...

THAT EVERYTHING FALLS APART IF I'M AWOL FOR A FEW MINUTES.

IT'S FINE! WE AREN'T *SO* BUSY...

IF THERE'S SOMEONE I WANNA TALK TO...

THEN I HAVE TO DO SO WHEN I CAN, NO?

SAY, ARE YOU A STUDENT?

...!

OTHERWISE, IT'D BE A WASTE TO LET THE CHANCE SLIP PAST ME.

...

What would I do without them!

THERE ARE STILL TIMES WHERE I FORGET TO TAKE OFF MY EARRINGS!

AND I ONLY REALIZE IT WHEN MY STAFF GIVES ME ANOTHER EARFUL.

OH, YOU'VE GOT PIERCED EARS! SO DO I, ACTUALLY.

Same look, eh?

REALLY?! YOUNG-STERS THESE DAYS GROW UP FAST...

YES... IN MY SECOND YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL.

AND WAS NOTHING MORE THAN AN ACCIDENT...

EVEN IF IT HAD NO DEEPER MEANING...

BUT...

Well, that makes sense.

SO THAT WAS JUST BY PURE COINCI-DENCE?

OH...

...SOME-THING PRECIOUS AND VALUABLE.

TO ME, IT WAS...

ERM...

COULD I ASK YOU SOMETHING?

SURE! WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

WHY DID YOU...

...DECIDE TO BECOME A PÂTISSIER?

...

HMM...

I GUESS...

I JUST IMPULSIVELY ENDED UP WALKING DOWN THIS PATH?

SORRY IF I DISAP-POINTED YOU, LAD...

I DON'T REALLY HAVE ANY NOBLE REASON I COULD BRAG ABOUT.

Color me surprised!

WHAT?

EVEN THOUGH YOU HAD SUCH A LOOK ON YOUR FACE EARLIER?!

DO YOU ALSO PLAN ON BECOMING A PÂTISSIER?

I'M... STILL RATHER UNDECIDED.

I THOUGHT YOU WERE THE SAME AS ME.

T.
≠ BOMP

...I COULD TELL THAT YOU WERE GIVING IT SOME GENUINE THOUGHT.

THAT SAID, WHEN I SAW YOUR EXPRES-SION...

WELL... THERE'S NO RULE THAT YOUR HOBBY MUST EVENTUALLY LEAD TO YOUR PROFESSION, AFTER ALL.

...IT WOULD DO YOU WELL TO NOT FORGET ABOUT IT.

AND THAT BITTERNESS YOU MUST HAVE FELT...

...IT ALL CAME TO ME AFTER BECOMING A PÂTISSIER.

...AND HAVING A CLEAR VISION ON WHAT KIND OF CAKES TO MAKE...

WANTING TO OPEN UP MY OWN PÂTISSERIE...

...

YOU SEE...

...AND WHEN I MADE IT MY PROFESSION...

WHEN I DID IT AS A SIMPLE HOBBY...

BUT TO ME...

...INTO REMEM-BERING THAT BITTERNESS I'D FELT.

I POURED MY HEART AND SOUL...

AND EVENTUAL-LY...

IT BROUGHT ME TO WHERE I AM NOW.

FINDING SOMETHING YOU ENJOY SO GENUINELY THAT IT CAN BRING YOU THIS FAR.

DON'T YOU THINK IT'S ASTONISHING?

IT CAN'T BE PUT INTO WORDS, RIGHT?

THE JOY AND PRIDE YOU FEEL WHEN YOU OVER-COME THAT INITIAL BITTERNESS...

NOT TO MEN-TION...

...IS A WONDER-FUL THING, DON'T YOU THINK?

BAKING CAKES...

I GOTTA START ON A CAKE.

ALL RIGHT...

I'LL GIVE IT A PASS.

NO. I'm NOWHERE NEAR THAT LEVEL.

I DON'T KNOW.

I'D LIKE SOME ADVICE. PLEASE!

I THINK I GOT HOOKED ON BAKING CAKES, I MEAN.

...YES, ABSOLUTELY.

Ah!

UM, YES! SORRY TO INTERRUPT YOU...

WHY, THANK YOU FOR SUP-PORTING US THIS MUCH.

OH?

AS FOR ME... I SHOULD REALLY HEAD BACK TO THE KITCHEN OR I'LL NEVER HEAR THE END OF IT.

RUMBLE

BE SURE TO VISIT US AGAIN SOMETIME, YEAH?

OF COUR-SE!

OH, DON'T MIND IT. IT WAS A DELIGHT TO TALK WITH HIM.

...

YEAH?

EXCUSE ME!

...AND YET...

I DON'T EVEN KNOW HIS NAME...

AND THE MAN THERE...

...LOOKED S IF HE WAS UING THE OF HIS WHILE THE

BAKING CAKES...

...IS A WONDER-FUL THING, DON'T YOU THINK?

HE'S DONE...

...SO MUCH FOR ME.

I'VE ONLY EVER BEEN ON THE SIDE WHO'S GIVEN. THE ONE WHO'S BLESSED.

THANK YOU SO MUCH...!!

THAT'S MY LINE!

I'LL GET TO HAVE A TASTE OF YOUR OWN CAKE.

I HOPE THAT ONE DAY...

紅が丘駅

Sta.

Thanks for spending time with me today! I had to immediately brag about all the cakes I got to eat to my family!

Thanks for taking me. I'm glad I went there.

!

YES, YES... AFTER DINNER, I PROMISE.

MAMA! CAN WE TRY THE CAKES SOON?

FINDING SOMETHING YOU ENJOY SO GENUINELY THAT IT CAN BRING YOU THIS FAR

DON'T YOU THINK IT'S ASTONISHING?

...INTO REMEMBERING THAT BITTERNESS I'D FELT.

I POURED MY HEART AND SOUL...

IS A WONDERFUL THING, DON'T YOU THINK?

BAKING CAKES...

Patisser

Plain

Chapter 119: Ghoul

MARCH 14TH...

I'M SO TIRED...!

FUEEE

PHE-EEW....

I WAS JUST RUNNING AROUND LIKE A HEADLESS CHICKEN, REALLY.

SQUEE

BUT YOU ALMOST GOT IT ONCE!

NOT TO MENTION THAT WAS MY MISPLAY...

SQUEE

I DIDN'T EVEN TOUCH THE BALL ONCE.

GREAT JOB OUT THERE.

YOU WERE RUNNING AROUND LIKE A MANIAC, HUH?

Kaoruko! Catch— Ah, too high!

Woooah!

YOOO! GREAT WORK DURING THE...

SUBA-RU...

Oh.

I... DON'T THINK SHE'S GOT THE ENERGY LEFT TO EVEN TALK.

SHE WAS OUT OF STEAM PRETTY MUCH FROM THE GET-GO, AFTER ALL...

はぁ HUFF

はぁ HUFF

NOW, NOW, THAT STUFF JUST HAPPENS!

YOU ALMOST SCORED A BUCKET, RIGHT?

GLOOM

I MESSED UP A SHOOT AND SENT THE BALL FLYING ACROSS THE HALL...

I... WANT TO GET BETTER AT SPORTS.

YOU THINK SO...?

YUP! SURELY, YOU CAN DO IT AGAIN IF YOU JUST KEEP TRYING!

I WATCHED THE VIDEO MADOKA RECORDED!

YOU DID ACTUALLY SCORE, RIGHT?

THEN BOWS AT EACH OTHER'S THEORIES ALL THE TIME.

WOULDN'T THAT BE.

OH, RIGHT!

Although it's been a while since then...

THE BRIEF LESSON THEY GAVE YOU A WHILE BACK MUST HAVE HELPED OUT A BUNCH, HUH?

AFTER ALL, WE'RE GOING TO MEET UP WITH THE BOYS LATER.

I JUST HOPE IT DOESN'T START RAINING...

SERIOUSLY? OH, YOU'RE RIGHT...

I COULD SEE THAT THE SKY WAS GETTING RATHER GRAY.

WHEN I WENT TO DRINK SOME WATER JUST NOW...

OH, ALSO...

HE'S SO CARING...

I would've been fine with it...

HEY, KAO-RUKO?

I'll bring my present for White Day over to your place later

What? No, you don't have to. I can just stop by your home.

But you came to visit on Valentine's, right? And if it really starts raining, I'd feel bad having you come over.

It should be fine if I make the trip, yeah?

Okay! Thanks a lot!

HE DIDN'T HAVE ANY CLUB ACTIVITIES TODAY.

KOSUKE?! YOU'RE BACK ALREADY?!

KCHAK

I'M HOME!

YUP.

WILL TSUMUGI-KUN BE HERE SOON?

にこ GRIN

...!

IT... IT'S BEEN A WHILE...

AND... DEAR ME, YOU DYED YOUR HAIR BLACK?

OH, TSUMUGI-KUN! IT'S WONDERFUL TO SEE YOU AGAIN.

I SWEAR...! DID YOU DRAG RINTARO-KUN HERE AGAIN?!

DID NOT! WE JUST RAN INTO EACH OTHER AT THE TRAIN STATION.

YEAH, HA HA...

KOSUKE, WHY DON'T YOU GET CHANGED FOR NOW?

WILL DO!

ALSO, MOM!

N-NO, IT'S OKAY! I JUST HOPE HE WASN'T BOTHERING YOU IN ANY WAY...

SORRY, I DIDN'T MEAN TO SHOW UP LIKE THIS...

SWSH

!

ANYWAY, I JUST STOPPED BY TO GIVE YOU THE PRESENT.

HERE.

I CAN'T WAIT TO TRY IT!

THANKS SO MUCH!

OH MY, DID HE BAKE ANOTHER CAKE FOR YOU?

YEP! CAME ALL THIS WAY TO BRING IT OVER!

I MADE A CAKE AS ALWAYS, SO...

I HOPE YOU LIKE IT.

WHAT?!

REALLY? THEN WHY DON'T YOU STAY FOR A LITTLE WHILE...

AND WE TRY THE CAKE RIGHT NOW?

BUT WON'T HE...

DOC

PLUS

I DON'T THINK I'D MENTALLY WITHSTAND THE STRESS OF HAVING YOU EAT IT IN FRONT OF ME

OH, REALLY?

...

IF SO, THEN... WITH PLEA-SURE.

WONDERFUL! I'LL PREPARE THE TABLE, THEN!

N-NO, WE CAN'T KEEP HIM HERE LIKE THIS...

WOULD THAT BE ALRIGHT WITH YOU?

OH, YEAH.

Thanks for having me

ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE OKAY WITH THAT?

ARE...

USED TO...THIS SORT OF THING?

I JUST... GOTTA GET USED TO THIS SORT OF THING.

IT'S SO GOOD! YOU SEE, IN THE RECENT CHAPTER—

...

THIS RIGHT HERE! DIDN'T YOU SAY YOU LIKED THIS SERIES LAST TIME?

WAIT, NO SPOILERS!

OH, THAT... NO, I HAVEN'T YET.

HEY, TSUMUGI-SAN! HAVE YOU READ THE NEWEST RELEASE YET?!

HM?

SUUURE.

COULD YOU HELP ME CARRY THESE PLATES, KAORUKO?

ムス…

KOSUKE STOLE MY SPOT NEXT TO HIM...

WOW...!

THE DESIGN IS ADORABLE...

THAT LOOKS SO GOOD!

...!

I'M SURE THAT MUST HAVE BEEN A LOT OF STRESSFUL WORK FOR YOU.

OH, WOW!

Ha ha...

I FILLED SEVERAL PAGES OF MY SKETCHBOOK TRYING TO COME UP WITH A GOOD ONE.

THAT'S RIGHT.

AMAZING... SURELY, YOU MUST HAVE COME UP WITH IT ALL BY YOURSELF, NO?

NO, NOT AT ALL.

IT WAS... FUN.

...GENTLE TASTE.

IT HAD THIS...

...FILLED ME WITH SUCH A WARM...

...AND FUZZY FEELING.

YOUR CAKE...

WHEN I GAVE HER THE CAKE...

...FOR HER BIRTH-DAY...

DID SHE ALSO MAKE THAT SORT OF FACE?

IF NOT FOR HER BIRTHDAY AS THE CAUSE...

YOU GO AND MAKE A CAKE FOR HER?

WHO ELSE IS HERE?

...I WOULD HAVE NEVER ENCOUN-TERED THIS HAPPI-NESS...

...THIS BITTER-NESS...

...AND THIS JOY FROM BAKING A CAKE FOR SOMEONE ELSE.

I HOPE THAT...

...MY FEELINGS HAVE REACHED HER WITH THIS CAKE.

THAT SHE UNDER-STANDS MY GRATI-TUDE...

...FOR GIVING ME AN INCENTIVE TO START BAKING CAKES.

...FIND A DREAM I CAN WORK TOWARD...

FOR HELPING ME...

...ALL THANKS TO HER.

GLAD TO HEAR IT.

PLUS, THE CAKE WAS INCREDIBLY DELICIOUS!

IT'S NO PROBLEM!

THANKS FOR LETTING ME STAY A LITTLE LONGER.

YEAH?

HEY, KAORUKO-SAN...?

THERE IS SOME-THING...

I'D LIKE TO TELL YOU.

...HE'S MEETING WITH KAO-CHAN RIGHT NOW.

IF I HAD TO GUESS...

KCHAK ガチャ

OH...?

I THOUGHT IT'D BE RAINING BY NOW.

...IS A PRESENT FOR HIS DETERMI-NATION.

SURELY, THIS CLEAR SKY...

11°月一

THUNK

YOU KNOW...

I'VE

TO BECOME A PATÎSSIER IN THE FUTURE.

THEN I GUESS...

...IT'S MY DUTY TO BECOME YOUR NUMBER ONE CUSTOMER!

I FEEL LIKE YOU'D BUY UP THE ENTIRE STOCK IN A SINGLE DAY.
Ha ha...
Ha ha ha!
I CAN'T MAKE ANY PROMISES THAT I WON'T!

I THOUGHT OF YOU AS A FRIEND ALREADY!

WITH EMOTIONS DIFFERENT FROM THAT TIME...

WHIRLING AROUND INSIDE OF ME NOW...

WHAT WOULD BE THE CORRECT THING TO DO?

WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Chapter 120: Natsusawa's White Day

WOOOW! THANKS SO MUCH!

Ichige Park

THE WRAPPING IS QUITE ADORABLE, NO LESS...

White Day

White Day

ARE YOU SURE YOU SHOULD BE SPOILING US LIKE THIS?

NO PRO-BLEM!

YAAAY!

GLAD YOU LIKE 'EM!

We all bought them together.

YES, THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

LET'S HANG OUT AGAIN LIKE LAST TIME!

I'D APPRECIATE THAT.

Yes...

FOR REAL?! THEN I GUESS WE NEED TO GIVE YOU SOME MORE POINTERS SOME-TIME!

OH, RIGHT! YOU GUYS, WE WERE PLAYING BASKETBALL IN P.E. TODAY!

SHOULD'VE SEEN SUBARU WORK! SHE ALMOST SCORED A POINT!

EVEN BETTER IF WE COULD HAVE RINTARO AND WAGURI-SAN WITH US.

I COULD PRACTICALLY SEE FLOWERS BLOOMING ALL AROUND HER.

TRUE!

After all, she's going to meet with Tsumugi-kun.

SPEAKING OF, KAORUKO WAS LIKE A BALL OF EXCITEMENT ON OUR WAY HOME EARLIER.

HE ALSO SAID IT WAS FOR WAGURI-SAN'S WHITE DAY PRESENT.

JUST LAST WEEK, I SAW HIM CONSTANTLY STARING AT SKETCHES OF CAKES IN HIS SKETCHBOOK.

OH, REALLY?

FOR SURE!

AND RINTARO SEEMED LIKE HE WAS GOING ALL OUT FOR HER WHITE DAY PRESENT.

AND NOT TO MEN-TION...

HE SEEMED PRETTY... REFRESHED FOR SOME REASON.

...HE LOOKED LIKE HE WAS HAVING A BLAST.

OH, REALLY NOW?

HE'S ALSO BEEN SLEEPING IN CLASS A LOT MORE AS OF LATE.

Rintaro, wake up!

The teacher's looking-!

HE WAS PROBABLY UP LATE TESTING COMBINATIONS AND IDEAS FOR THE CAKE.

SO HE DOES ACTUALLY SLEEP IN CLASS? SURPRI-SING...

SHAKE

SHAKE

STILL, NOW I'M KIND OF CURIOUS WHAT HE COOKED UP.

KAORUKO BETTER BE SHOWING ME SOME PICTURES LATER! I JUST KNOW SHE'S GONNA TAKE SOME.

HONESTLY, I WANNA EAT SOME MORE OF RINTARO'S CAKES SOME-TIME.

THOSE ONES ARE SUCH A TREAT!

I WAS WON-DER-ING...

HOW DID YOUR MOCK EXAMS GO?

!

ACTU-ALLY...

BIT UN-RELATED, BUT...

NO, IT'S PERFECTLY FINE.

IN FACT, I RECEIVED MY RESULTS, TOO.

SORRY, MAYBE I SHOULDN'T HAVE ASKED...?

!

OUR SMART GUY OVER HERE MENTIONED YOU GOT THE RESULTS BACK LAST WEEK, SO...

NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT...

Honestly, I can't imagine how I'd do...

SO EVEN YOU TWO GENIUSES WERE STRUGGLING?

Ohhh...

...BUT THE EXPECTED LEVEL IS QUITE HIGH.

IF I HAD TO SAY... I DID ABOUT AVERAGE.

I DID QUITE WELL WHEN IT COMES TO THE SUBJECTS I'M CONFIDENT IN...

WHA ...?

OH, RIGHT. I ALMOST FORGOT...

YOU MENTIONED THAT YOU HAD A FEW QUESTIONS FOR NATSUSAWA-KUN.

SUBARU, YOU BROUGHT THE RESULTS AND SOME TEXTBOOKS WITH YOU, RIGHT?

PLUS, WE CAN'T EXACTLY MEET UP THAT OFTEN, EITHER.

Ironically, since our schools are right next to each other

NO NEED TO HOLD BACK ON OUR BEHALF, YOU KNOW?

STUDYING AND IMPROVING IS IMPORTANT, AFTER ALL. GOTTA TAKE EVERY OPTION YOU GET.

BUT TO BE HONEST, IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE NOW.

I WAS JUST THINKING OF ASKING YOU IF THE CHANCE CAME ABOUT.

WHILE YOU TWO ARE BUSY STUDYING, I'LL HAVE SOME FUN WITH THOSE IRON BARS!

PRETTY RANDOM, NO?!

WELL, I KNOW JUST WHAT TO DO!

THESE TWO ARE UNPREDICTABLE, I SWEAR...

RIGHT?!

ACTUALLY... YOU MIGHT HAVE A POINT.

AND I'VE BEEN INTERESTED IN GIVING THEM A WHIRL FOR A WHILE NOW!

GOTTA TAKE THE CHANCE WHEN IT SHOWS ITSELF!

GOOD CHOICE.

IF NOT, THEY'LL END UP IN THE HOSPITAL SOME WAY OR ANOTHER.

WELP, I'LL HAVE TO WATCH THE KIDS, I GUESS.

ぴゅーん 200M

LET'S GOOO!

TIME'S A WASTING, YUZUHARA-SAN!

OH BOY...

Are these guys really in high school?

I swear...

...

ぼーっ DAZED

AH

I THINK WE SHOULD LEAVE IT AT THAT, USAMI! IT'S GOTTEN PRETTY LATE, TOO.

MAMA YOSHIDA.

MUM?

SOMETIMES YOUTA-SAN FEELS LIKE MY MOTHER.

PFF-FT!

LIKE A MOTHER LOOKING AFTER HER CHILDREN...

Both Madoka and Usami-kun said that about him a while ago.

...!

HEE HEE...

YOU SAY THAT WITH A STRAIGHT FACE, TOO!

I'LL ACCEPT WHATEVER MIGHT BE BURDENING YOU, TOO...

I'M SURE

THAT I'VE BEEN WATCHING ALL THIS TIME.

SO, PLEASE...

DON'T ERASE THE HATSU-SAWA-KUN...

BUT I REFUSE TO BELIEVE THAT YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED.

NATURALLY, I HAVEN'T KNOWN YOU FOR THAT LONG...

...

...ALLOWING ME TO MOVE FORWARD AND GROW AS A PERSON.

YOU WERE ALWAYS HONEST AND UPFRONT WITH ME...

...MORE THAN LIKELY.

COULD YOUR CONVERSATION WITH HIDAKA-KUN HAVE PLAYED INTO THAT?

HM...? OH, RIGHT...

HONESTLY, I COMPLETELY FLUNKED THE FIRST DAY, BUT I GUESS I PULLED MYSELF UP ON THE SECOND.

SO... HOW DID YOU DO ON YOUR EXAMS?

...

ERP... SORRY.

Bad habit of mine

What did I tell you?

HEY.

Ha ha...

HONESTLY, PRETTY LAME OF ME, HUH?

MESSING UP 'CAUSE MY MIND WAS ELSEWHERE.

THAT ASIDE...

I'M GLAD YOU MANAGED TO MAKE UP.

YEAH...

!

ACTUALLY, THE OTHER DAY, I TOLD THE GUYS.

ABOUT MY CONVERSATION WITH HIDAKA, I MEAN.

I'M SORRY.

I'M SORRY, NATSUSAWA...

I'M SO SORRY.

I HOPE YOU WON'T REGRET SAYING THAT.

AND AS YOU'D EXPECT...

"GOOD FOR YOU," THEY SAID.

SO, ONCE AGAIN...

...

FIGURES...

THANKS FOR EVERY-THING.

...

YOU'RE WEL-COME.

Rock on, buddy!

Raaaaaaah!

Ha ha ha! You're like a spinning wheel!

WOO!

KEEP IT GOING, USAMI-KUN!

YOU SURE?

I THINK... THIS CAN WAIT FOR ANOTHER DAY.

YES.

TOK

TOK

SNICKER

...

IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE RIGHT NOW.

...I NEVER WOULD HAVE IMAGINED THAT WE'D BE GETTING THIS CLOSE...

MEETING UP AS FRIENDS LIKE WE DO NOW.

I'M SORRY!

I REALIZE HOW AWFUL I ACTED.

WAY BACK WHEN I APOLO-GIZED TO YOU BOYS HERE IN THIS VERY PARK...

YOU KNOW ...

I FEEL GLAD THAT WE BECAME FRIENDS.

FOR EACH MEMORY I MAKE WITH ALL OF YOU...

...MAKES ME FEEL INCREDIBLY GRATEFUL.

TO HAVE SOMEONE I CARE ABOUT THIS DEEPLY...

AND THAT'S WHY...

...I WANT TO TREASURE AND ENJOY THE TIME WE SPEND TOGETHER.

IT'S RIGHT NOW...

BUT THE THING IS...

...HAD TROUBLE DEALING WITH MEN.

I'VE ALWAYS

HAVING YOU WITH ME...

...WOULD BE VERY REASSURING.

THAT I WANT TO BECOME FRIENDS WITH ALL OF YOU.

I THOUGHT OF YOU AS A FRIEND ALREADY!

...THAT'S A GREAT ATTITUDE TO HAVE.

SURE...

EITHER WAY, WHAT DO YOU SAY WE JOIN THE OTHERS?

THUMP!!

?

AND THAT'S WHY...

I FEEL GLAD THAT WE BECAME FRIENDS.

FOR EACH MEMORY I MAKE WITH ALL OF YOU

I WANT TO TREASURE AND ENJOY THE TIME WE SPEND TOGETHER.

MAKES ME FEEL INCREDIBLY GRATEFUL.

TO HAVE SOMEONE I CARE ABOUT THIS DEEPLY.

SAYING THAT SORT OF STUFF WITH A STRAIGHT FACE.

HERE SHE GOES...

I DON'T THINK THERE'S ANYTHING UP FOR DEBATE ANYMORE.

IT'S PRETTY CLEAR...

...HOW I FEEL ABOUT HER.

BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN...

I WANT OUR RELATIONSHIP TO PROGRESS BEYOND WHAT WE HAVE.

IN THE END...

I WATCHED HER ALL THIS TIME, ALL THESE MONTHS...

AS SHE TRIED HER HARDEST TO IMPROVE.

...IT'S A SIMPLE STORY.

SHE BELIEVED IN ME...

...REASSURING ME THAT I WOULD BE FINE NO MATTER WHAT.

...DEVELOPING ONE-SIDED FEELINGS FOR HER.

THIS IS ALL ABOUT ME...

TO HAVE SOMEONE I CARE ABOUT THIS DEEPLY MAKES ME FEEL INCREDIBLY GRATEFUL.

...I WILL SURELY COME TO REGRET IT IN THE FUTURE...

SEEING HER SMILE LIKE THAT...

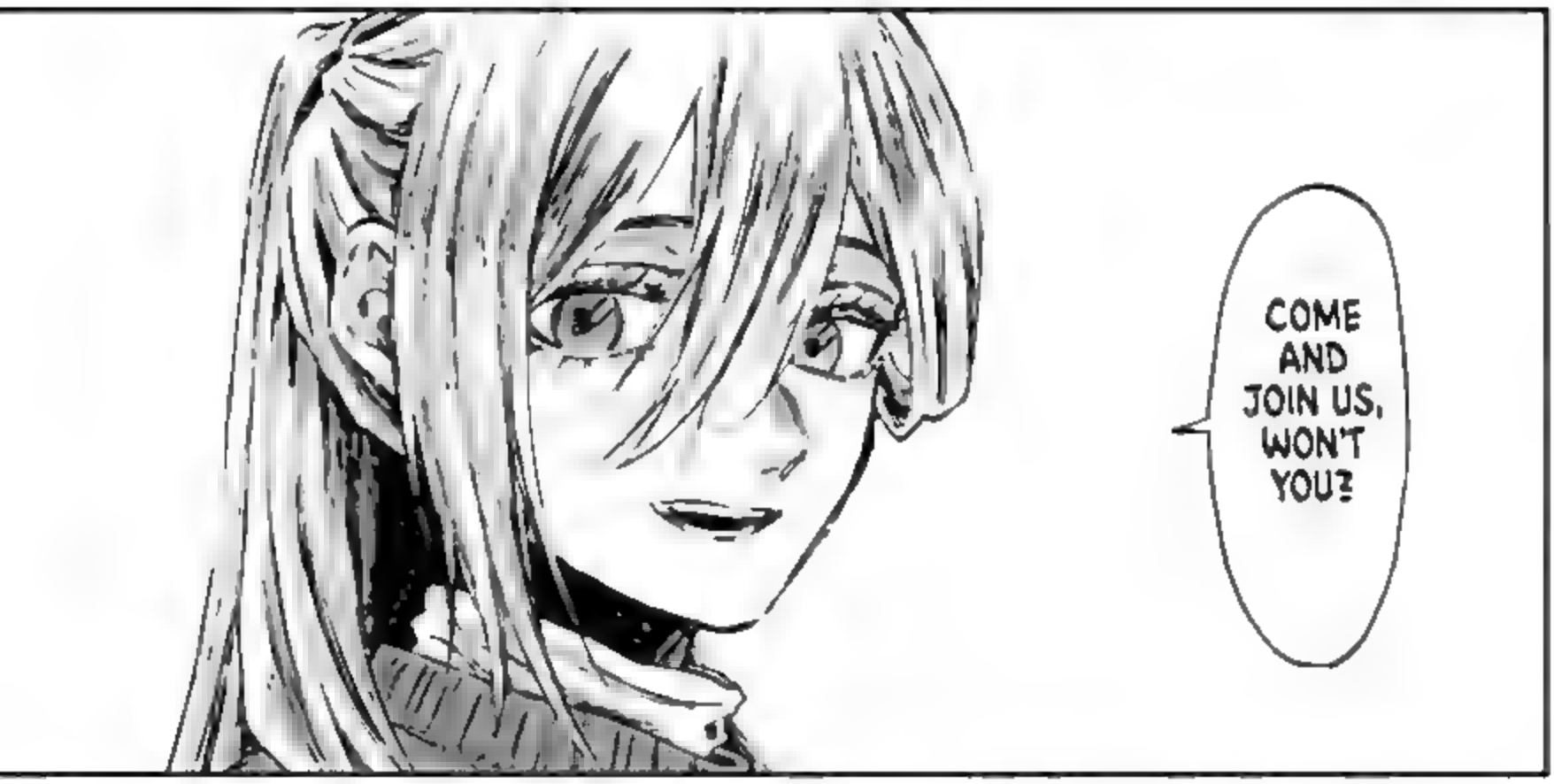
...I CAN'T BRING MYSELF...

...TO SAY "I LOVE YOU."

...I WON'T TELL HER.

AND SO...

SAKU! GET YOUR BUTT OVER HERE!
...!


COME AND JOIN US, WON'T YOU?

...'COURSE.

I...

...WON'T.

THANK-FULLY, WE WERE SPARED A SUDDEN DOWNPOUR.

BUT IT WAS FUN!

YIKES, I FEEL ALL DIZZY NOW...

WHAT IS IT?

HOSHINA-SAN, YUZUHARA-SAN...

THERE'S SOMETHING I'VE BEEN MEANING TO ASK YOU, ACTUALLY.

AL-MOST FOR-GOT...

OH, RIGHT.

...KIKYO'S CLASSROOMS DIDN'T HAVE THE HABIT OF CLOSING THE WINDOW CURTAINS. DO YOU HAPPEN TO KNOW ANY-THING ABOUT THAT?

APPARENTLY, TEN YEARS AGO OR SO...

WELL...

WHO'D YOU HEAR THAT FROM?

FOR REAL? THAT WAS A THING?

WHEN HE STOPPED BY FOR NEW YEAR'S, HE TOLD ME ALL SORTS OF STORIES.

MY OLDEST BROTHER'S ACTUALLY A GRADUATE FROM CHIDORI, RIGHT.

THAT WAS WHAT HE TOLD ME.

WHEN I WAS STILL AROUND, THEY DIDN'T KEEP THOSE WINDOW CURTAINS CLOSED, I THINK.

THE NEGATIVE RELATIONSHIP WE'RE SEEING TODAY WASN'T A THING BACK THEN.

HE ALSO SAID THAT, ALTHOUGH THE SCHOOLS WEREN'T ON EXCLUSIVELY CLOSE TERMS...

SOUNDS UNREAL TO ME..

THAT'S RATHER HARD TO BELIEVE CONSIDERING KIKYO'S TREATMENT TOWARD US

GUESS WE HAVE TO BE CAUTIOUS STILL.

ACTUALLY ONE OF MY FORMER CLASSMATES FROM MIDDLE SCHOOL SAW US ON THE DAY OF THE MOON BEAMS

NOTHING HAPPENED BECAUSE OF THAT

EITHER WAY NOBODY'S SEEN US TOGETHER SINCE THEN, SO IT SHOULD BE FINE.

YEAH? I SEE SORRY TO SUDDENLY THROW THAT YOUR WAY.

I'M SORRY, BUT I'M NOT TOO FAMILIAR WITH OUR SCHOOL'S HISTORY...

...

FINALLY CAME TO AN END

OUR SECOND YEAR, FILLED WITH PRECIOUS MEMORIES...

NOW, IN APRIL...

OUR NEW YEAR...

...AS THIRD-YEAR STUDENTS BEGINS.

Plain

Are you ready to order?

Thank you very much!

SORRY, SIR!

YOU'RE WASTING TOO MUCH TIME!

RIN-TARO! TOO SLOW!

IS IT JUST ME...

WOOOW...

I FEEL LIKE I'M BEING JUDGED FOR EVERY SMALL ERROR I MAKE...

...OR HAS TSUMUGI-SAN BEEN MUCH STRICTER WITH THE POOR GUY SINCE SPRING BREAK STARTED?

S-SORRY!

3 TURNS

LESS TALKING, MORE MOVING.

I ALREADY KNEW THIS WAS GONNA HAPPEN.

WELL...

YOU CAN CUT THE TENSION WITH A KNIFE IN THERE...

Chapter 121: Pâtissier

WHAT WAS THAT...?

RINTARO, YOU...

...WANT TO BECOME A PÂTISSIER?

...

YEAH.

...!

WAP

WHY IS YOUR FIRST INSTINCT TO LOOK AT ME?

AND HONESTLY, THERE'S NO GUARANTEE IT'LL WORK OUT. BUT...

!

IT'S NOT LIKE...

I HAVE IT ALL PLANNED OUT TO THE SMALLEST DETAIL.

...

THIS IS THE ONLY PATH THAT REALLY MADE SENSE TO ME.

WHEN I THOUGHT ABOUT...

WHAT I WANTED TO DO IN THE FUTURE...

LATELY...

A BITTER AND FRUSTRATED ONE.

I JUST FEEL FRUSTRATED.

RATHER THAN ENJOYING THE TASTE...

WHENEVER I HAVE A BITE OF YOUR CAKES...

OR THE AMAZING ONES FROM OTHER BAKERIES...

...BEFORE I STARTED BAKING MY OWN CAKES.

I DON'T THINK I CAN JUST GO BACK TO HOW I WAS

I GUESS IT'S THE PROOF I NEEDED.

TO REALIZE HOW SERIOUS I'D BECOME ABOUT THIS.

...I FEEL A LOT MORE... AT PEACE WITH MYSELF.

NOW THAT I'VE FOUND MY ANSWER...

...I SURELY WON'T REGRET THIS DECISION.

AND THAT'S WHY...

THE REST COMES ALONG THE WAY, OR SO I THINK AT LEAST.

...WHAT'S IMPOST IMPORTANT IS THAT YOU DON'T HAVE ANY REGRETS LATER.

WHENEVER YOU HAVE TO MAKE A DECISION...

...

...

I SEE...

WELL...

SLURP

ずず…

IF THAT'S YOUR ANSWER, THEN I DON'T SEE A REASON TO OBJECT.

BLUNT

HUH?!

I WAS MENTALLY PREPARING MYSELF FOR YOU TO TRY AND TALK ME OUT OF IT, SO...

W-WELL...

WHAT'S THAT REACTION ABOUT?

I WOULD HAVE NEVER LET YOU HELP AT OUR STORE EVER AGAIN.

TO BE HONEST, IF YOU HAD BROUGHT THIS UP WITHOUT BEING VERY SERIOUS ABOUT IT...

AS WELL AS THE CAKES YOU WORKED ON...

I'D LIKE SOME ADVICE, *PLEASE!*

WATCHING YOU DURING ALL THAT...

TO REALIZE HOW SERIOUS I'D BECOME ABOUT THIS.

BUT JUDGING FROM WHAT YOU JUST SAID...

FOR THAT REASON, I HAVE NO REASON TO OBJECT.

...I COULD TELL THAT YOU WEREN'T JUST WINGING ANY OF IT.

...!

THERE'S ONE THING I WANT YOU TO KEEP IN MIND.

THAT SAID...

KCHAK

KCHAK

KCHAK

YOU WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO KEEP WORKING AT OUR PATISSERIE...

AFTER YOU GRADUATE HIGH SCHOOL.

YEAH.

I'M READY FOR THAT.

THEN I HAVE NO OBJEC-TIONS.

DINNER WAS DELICIOUS.

GLAD TO HEAR IT!

NO, IT'S OKAY...

Ha ha ha!

HONESTLY, A BIT HARSH OF HIM, DON'T YOU THINK?

PHEW

I DIDN'T INTEND ON WORKING HERE ANYWAY.

TO BE HONEST, I HALF-EXPECTED HIM TO SAY SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

!

WITH NO EASY WAY OUT AND ALL.

AND THIS HELPS ME STAY MOTIVATED, TOO.

...

PHEW, I'M FULL.

KLANK

HEY, RINTARO?

YEAH?

WHAT DO YOU SAY WE HAVE SOME DESSERT?

REALLY?

ACTUALLY, DO YOU REMEMBER? WHEN YOU WERE LITTLE, YOU'D OFTEN EAT THIS SHORTCAKE.

I JUST FELT LIKE HAVING A SLICE ONCE IN A WHILE.

YOU'VE BEEN HELPING OUT A LOT LATELY, SO IT MUST HAVE BEEN A WHILE SINCE YOU HAD ONE OF OURS, RIGHT?

WHAT BROUGHT THIS UP...?

Ha ha ha!

IT GOT SO BAD YOU'D JUST EAT SOME OF THE STRAWBERRIES WE PLANNED ON USING. I HAD TO GIVE YOU SOME STERN SCOLDING THANKS TO THAT.

...

ALWAYS. DIDN'T EVEN HAVE TO ASK TWICE WHEN THE QUESTION CAME UP.

YOU ALWAYS HAD A THING FOR STRAW-BERRIES, AFTER ALL.

DO YOU KNOW WHERE WE GOT THE NAME FOR OUR PATISSERIE?

NO... YOU NEVER TOLD ME.

HEY, RIN-TARO...

KLAK

BASI-CALLY...

FRANK, CANDID, AND UNPRETENTIOUS.

Patisserie

Plain

PATISSERIE **PLAIN**...

...THAT WHEN IT CAME TO OPENING UP HIS OWN STORE...

SEE, YOUR FATHER TOLD ME AGES AGO...

...HE WANTED IT TO BE A CASUAL AND OPEN PLACE.

ONE WHERE THE CUSTOMERS COULD VISIT AT ANY GIVEN TIME...

...AND NOT FEEL FORCED TO KEEP APPEARANCES.

AFTER ALL...

WHEN YOU AND SOTARO WERE MUNCHING ON THE CAKES, ENJOYING LIFE WITHOUT A WORRY IN THE WORLD...

AND I THINK...

...THIS ALSO INCLUDED WHAT HE WISHED FOR HIS OWN SONS.

HE WAS WATCHING OVER THE BOTH OF YOU...

...WITH THE WARMEST SMILE ON HIS FACE.

WHAT YOU SAID EARLIER...

YOU MIGHT INTERPRET HIS WORDS...

...AS A MEANS OF NOT GIVING YOU AN EASY WAY OUT...

YOU KNOW, RINTARO.

AND OBVIOUSLY, THAT MAY VERY WELL BE PARTIALLY HIS INTENTION...

...BUT I FEEL LIKE THERE'S MORE TO IT THAN JUST THAT.

WHEN YOU WANT TO TAKE SOME TIME OFF AND RELAX WITHOUT WORRYING ABOUT A THING...

IN THE FUTURE, WHEN YOU'RE ALL GROWN UP...

AND THERE MIGHT BE A TIME WHEN YOU FEEL EXHAUSTED OR TIRED BECAUSE OF YOUR JOB...

Patisserie
Plain

THEN WE'LL STILL BE HERE, WELCOMING YOU WITH OPEN ARMS AND ALLOWING YOU TO DO JUST THAT.

...IS SOME-THING I WHOLLY AGREE WITH.

AND WISHING FOR ONE'S CHILDREN TO ALWAYS HAVE A PLACE THEY CAN CALL HOME...

I WANT HIM TO FEEL AT PEACE WHEN HE'S HOME.

RIGHT NOW, THIS PLACE IS PROBABLY HIS ONLY OASIS.

PLEASE.

...

I THINK... WE FIRST ASKED SOTARO FOR HELP, YEAH.

WHEN WE WERE STRUG-GLING WITH PER-SONNEL...

I ASKED YOUR FATHER IF WE COULD ASK ONE OF YOU, FULLY EXPECTING TO GET SHOT DOWN.

REALLY?

THOUGH, THAT'S ALSO WHY I WAS RATHER SURPRISED...

WHEN HE AGREED TO LET YOU HELP OUT WITH THE STORE.

HONESTLY, I WAS EXPECTING A STRONG NO.

YEAH, ALL RIGHT.

AND THEN, TO MY SURPRISE, HE SAID...

...

I WONDER WHY HE AGREED...

...

AND SINCE SOTARO AGREED, WE JUST FIGURED WE MIGHT AS WELL ASK YOU FOR HELP FROM TIME TO TIME, TOO.

WORK IS ALL ABOUT TEAMWORK, AFTER ALL.

AT LEAST NOW WHILE THEY CAN AFFORD TO NOT WORRY ABOUT IT YET.

...I FIGURE IT WON'T HURT TO SHOW THEM THAT KIND OF ENVIRON-MENT.

IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT JOB THEY'LL HAVE IN THE FUTURE...

WELL, YOU SEE...

HE MIGHT NOT LOOK LIKE IT...

YEAH, PRETTY MUCH...

HA HA HA!

I was really worried you'd grow up to be just like him

HE'S JUST THAT SORT OF PERSON, SO HE STRUGGLED A LOT BACK THEN.

...WHAT'S BEST FOR HIS BOYS.

...BUT HE'S ALWAYS THINKING ABOUT...

...

...YEAH.

GOOD.

I CAN TELL.

WHILE WE'RE AT IT, LET ME SAY THIS, TOO...

CRK

THEN...

NO MATTER WHAT'LL HAPPEN...

...I'LL ALWAYS BE ON YOUR SIDE.

PROMISE ME...

...YOU WON'T EVER FORGET ABOUT THAT!

OH!
Patisserie
Plain
WELCOME!

Chapter 122: Entering the Third Year

APRIL...

THE DAY OF THE OPENING CERE-MONY...

高

COMING UP NEXT...

STUDENT COUNSELLOR TOKI-SENSEI WILL BE GIVING A SPECIAL GREETING.

SHHH...
DO YOU THINK WE'LL HAVE HER AS OUR HOMEROOM TEACHER AGAIN THIS YEAR?

WITH YOU MOVING UP A YEAR, A NEW SCHOOL TERM BEGINS AS OF TODAY...

...AND DEVOTE YOURSELF TO YOUR STUDIES THAT IT WON'T BRING SHAME TO OUR NAME.

HOWEVER, YOUR DUTIES REMAIN THE SAME AS BEFORE.

YOU ARE TO HOLD PRIDE IN YOUR STATUS AS A STUDENT OF KIKYO ACADEMY...

THIS ESPECIALLY IS THE CASE FOR THE STUDENTS IN THEIR THIRD YEAR.

!

ビク

FLINCH

ク

THE POSSIBILITIES YOU WILL HAVE AVAILABLE IN YOUR FUTURE...

...ALL DEPEND ON YOUR EFFORTS DURING YOUR CRUCIAL STUDENT LIFE THAT YOU ARE EXPERIENCING RIGHT NOW.

...THIS YEAR WILL BE A HARSH BATTLE.

FOR ALL OF YOU EXAMINEES...

...SOME OF YOU MAY HAVE ALREADY SET YOUR EYES ON A SPECIFIC FUTURE OR PATH.

SURELY, EVEN BEFORE MOVING UP TO BECOME THIRD-YEAR STUDENTS...

...TO NOT LET ALL YOUR EFFORTS GO TO WASTE BECAUSE YOU NEED TO LET YOURSELVES GO IN MOMENTARY PLEASURE.

THIS IS MORE OF A LECTURE THAN ANY-THING...

THAT IS WHY I IMPLORE YOU...

...AND THINK DEEPLY ABOUT WHAT YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH.

...TO USE THIS FINAL YEAR...

I WANT YOU...

AND I AM EXCITED TO SEE WHAT RESULTS YOU SHOW US.

I WANT TO SPECIALIZE IN SCHOOL-RELATED ISSUES... SO THAT I CAN HELP OTHER CHILDREN IF THEY ARE DEALING WITH PROBLEMS...

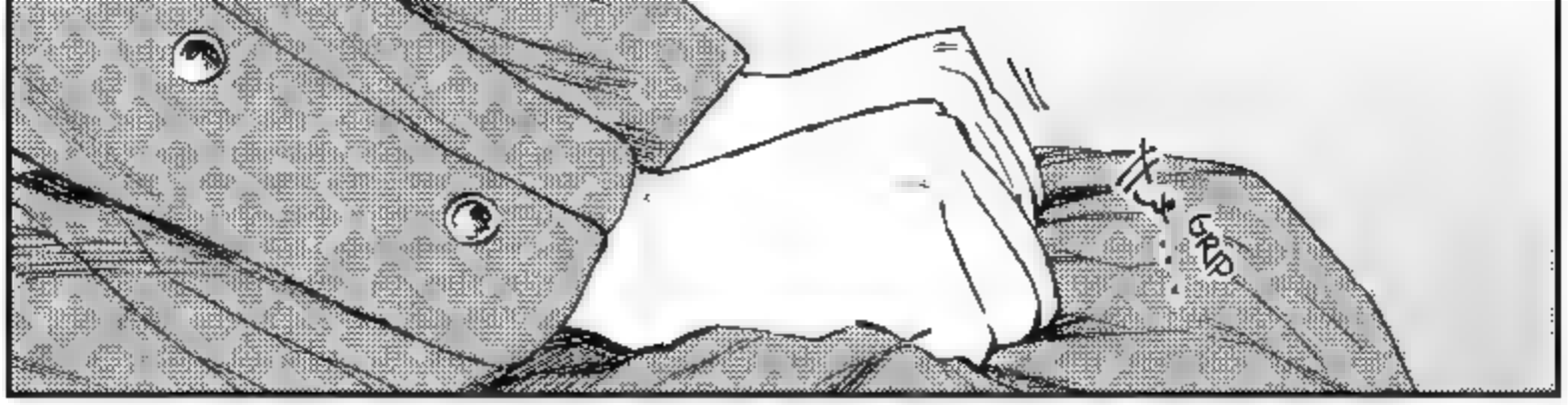
IF POSSIBLE...

I'VE DECIDED..

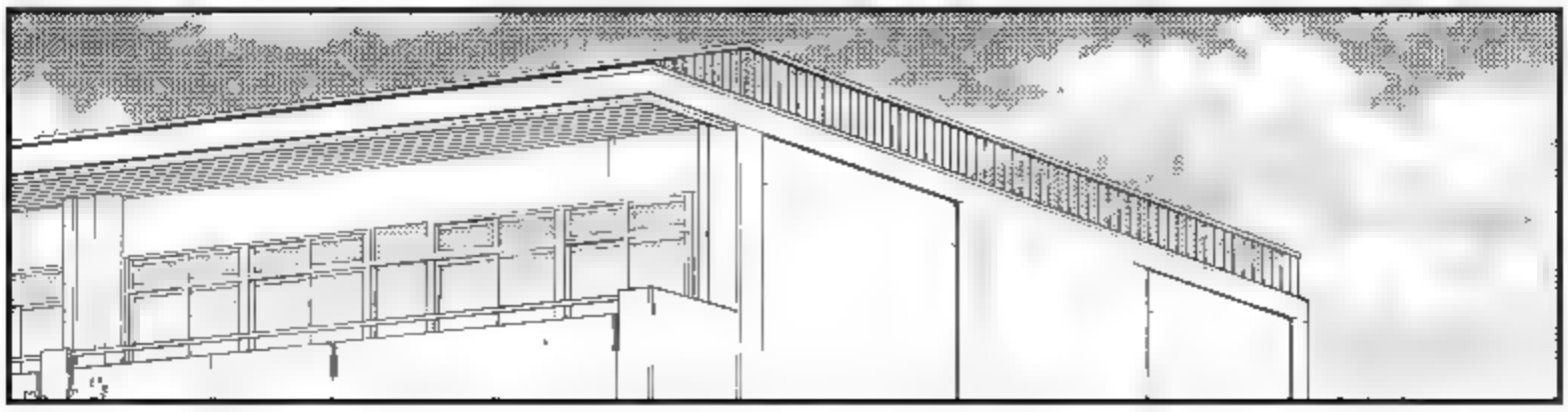
TO BECOME A PSYCHIATRIST IN THE FUTURE.

SOME OF YOU MAY HAVE ALREADY SET YOUR EYES ON A SPECIFIC FUTURE OR PATH.

...


ぎゅっ
GRIP

...



PEOPLE WERE SO EXCITED!
3-1
ガヤガヤ
CHATTER
ガヤガヤ
CHATTER
Phew!
THE OPENING CEREMONY'S FINALLY OVER!

BUT I CAN'T BLAME THEM! AFTER HEARING WHO OUR HOMEROOM TEACHER WILL BE...

TSUKADA-SENSEI WILL BE HANDLING CLASS 3-1.

HECK YEAH!

LOOKING FORWARD TO ANOTHER YEAR WITH YOU.

TSUKA-CHAAAN!!

BWAM

I MEAN, I KNEW IT'D BE LIKE THIS BEFORE...

BUT STAYING IN THE SAME CLASS AS ALL OF Y'ALL IS JUST THE BEST!

AIN'T THAT RIGHT, RINTARO?!

SO YOU SAY, BUT I KNOW YOU'RE JUST AS HAPPY TO HAVE HIM AGAIN!

I MEAN, THE CLASSES DON'T CHANGE DESPITE US MOVING UP A YEAR, SO YOU COULD'VE GUESSED HE'D BE STAYING AROUND, TOO.

ZIP IT.

OKAY, EVERY-ONE!

TAKE YOUR SEATS, WON'T YOU?

IT'S ME, EVERYONE'S FAVORITE TSUKADA-SENSEI. LET'S GET HOMEROOM STARTED, SHALL WE?

SOMEONE'S CONFIDENT!

Ha Ha Ha!

RIGHT ON.

NOW THEN...

MOST OF WHAT NEEDED TO BE SAID HAS ALREADY BEEN BROUGHT UP DURING THE CEREMONY...

HENCE, I'LL KEEP IT SHORT HERE.

STARTING TODAY, YOU ARE ALL IN YOUR FINAL YEAR.

YOU HAVE ONE BRIEF YEAR LEFT IN YOUR HIGH SCHOOL LIFE.

IT IS NOW THE TIME YOU HAVE TO START THINKING SERIOUSLY ABOUT YOUR FUTURE.

THERE ARE MANY THINGS THAT YOU WILL HAVE TO DEAL WITH, TOO.

...SPENDING THIS PRECIOUS TIME TOGETHER!

HOWEVER!

YOU ARE NOT ALONE. YOU HAVE ALL YOUR FRIENDS AROUND YOU...

THIS IS YOUR LAST YEAR, FOLKS!

...YOU DON'T END IT IN REGRET!

MAKE SURE...

ENJOYING YOUR TIME AS STUDENTS IS JUST AS IMPORTANT!

WITH THAT OUT OF THE WAY...

FWIP

ALL RIGHT!

Raffle

NO NEED TO TELL US THAT!

ABSO-LUTE-LY!

FINALLY!!

Raffle Box

AS IS TRADITION ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR, I'LL HAVE YOU CHANGE SEATS!

AFTER ALL, THE CURRENT ORDER IS STILL BASED ON THE STUDENT NUMBERS!

HONESTLY, I'VE BEEN LOOKING FORWARD TO THIS.

CHATTER

GRIN

This is really important.

RIGHT? AFTER ALL, WE WON'T CHANGE OUR SEATS FOR THE REST OF THE YEAR AFTER THIS.

SHOULD'VE STUDIED MORE, DUH.

SWITCHING SEATS SHOULD BE SOMETHING EXCITING, SO WHY DO I ONLY HAVE GUYS AROUND ME AND NOT SOME CUTE GIRLS?!

Tell me, Natsusawa!

OUCH?!

WOO

Y'KNOW, WHAT'S STOPPING US FROM JUST KEEPING THE SAME SEATS AS LAST YEAR?

WOO

CHATTER

YEAH, WE WERE PRETTY MUCH JUST SWITCHING BETWEEN EACH OTHER ANYWAY.

YOU'RE TOO TALL, MAN! NOBODY'S GONNA SEE THE BLACK-BOARD IF YOU SIT IN THE FRONT!

SAYS THE GUY WHO JUST SLEEPS DURING CLASS ANYWAY....

HUH? WHY?

OF COURSE, TSUMUGI'S GOTTA STAY WHERE HE IS!

JUST ONE...

...MORE YEAR...

I NEVER THOUGHT I WOULD EVER CONSIDER...

A WHOLE YEAR TO BE THIS BRIEF OF A TIME.

!

OH.

...

TAT

SERIOUS-LY...

WHO'D GUESS THAT WE'RE ABOUT TO GO WATCH THE CHERRY BLOSSOMS...

...TOGE-THER WITH THOSE SAME GIRLS.

HEE HEE...

BUT I ALSO CAN'T FORGET ABOUT THE MOCK EXAMS AND TO KEEP MY STUDIES UP...

I REALLY AM EXCITED!

...

WE CAN NEVER BE TOO CAREFUL OF WHO MIGHT BE WATCHING.

THAT'S VERY TRUE.

AND WITH EVERYTHING THAT'S AHEAD OF US, INCLUDING THE MOCK EXAMS, WE MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO TAKE IT AS LEISURELY AS LAST YEAR...

TO BE FAIR, WE ARE IN OUR FINAL YEAR.

WHAT SENSEI SAID EARLIER IS DEFINITELY TRUE.

DON'T FORGET THAT, KAORUKO!

THAT ARE ONLY AVAILABLE TO US RIGHT NOW!

BUT EVEN SO, WE HAVE A DUTY OF ENJOYING ALL THE THINGS...

THINK WE SHOULD

THINGS

YEAH!

HMM-MM...

駅

*Station

COULD SOMETHING HAVE HAPPENED?

WAGURI-SAN SURE IS TAKING HER TIME.

HAVE YOU HEARD ANYTHING ON YOUR END, RIN-TARO?

NOTHING. I CAN TRY CALLING HER.

AND AFTER THAT, SHE JUST STOPPED READING MY MESSAGES...

SHE TOLD ME TO GO AHEAD WITHOUT HER, SO THAT'S WHAT I DID. BUT...

OH!

SHE ANS-WERED.

HEY, KAO-RUKO-SAN—

TSUMUGI-SAN?!

BEEP

RING RING RING

!

...

SHE'S FINE... RIGHT?

S-SORRY, SHE CAN'T ANSWER THE PHONE RIGHT NOW!

Her little brother.

Kosuke?

WHY ARE YOU ANSWERING KAORUKO-SAN'S PHONE...?

THAT VOICE... IS THAT YOU, KOSUKE-KUN?!

IT'S MOM, SHE...

OUR MOM...

SHE'S ALWAYS BEEN FRAGILE.

...

SHE COLLAPSED, AND...

SHE...

Chapter 123: Putting on a Brave Face

OH GOSH...

330

SAYING I COLLAPSED... THAT'S A BIT OF AN EXAGGERATION, DON'T YOU THINK?

OH...

...

I WAS JUST FEELING A BIT UNDER THE WEATHER...

SINCE THE SEASONS WERE CHANGING, THAT'S ALL.

EVEN THOUGH YOU WERE ON YOUR WAY TO WATCH THE CHERRY BLOSSOMS...

I'M SORRY FOR MAKING YOU WORRY ABOUT ME.

SIGH

PHEEW

THAT'S SO GREAT TO HEAR...!

OH, THAT...

SO I WAS THINKING THAT SOMETHING MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED.

KAORUKO TOLD ME TO GO ON AHEAD WITHOUT HER...

THANKS FOR COMING ALL THE WAY OVER HERE TO SEE ME, SUBARU-CHAN!

Sorry dear...

I'M GLAD TO SEE YOU'RE DOING FINE.

...AND PLANNED TO JOIN UP WITH YOU GUYS LATER AFTER MAKING SURE NOTHING WAS WRONG.

AFTER COMING HOME FROM THE OPENING CEREMONY, I WAS ABOUT TO GET READY WHEN I REALIZED THAT MOM WASN'T LOOKING TOO ROSY...

AND SINCE I WAS LOOKING AFTER MOM, KOSUKE ANSWERED THE CALL FOR ME.

...

HOWEVER... SHE STARTED TO FEEL DIZZY TO THE POINT SHE COULDN'T EVEN STAND UP PROPERLY, SO WE IMMEDIATELY CALLED AN AMBULANCE.

THAT WAS ALSO ROUGHLY AROUND THE SAME TIME RINTARO-KUN CALLED.

I'M SORRY, YOU TWO...

シュン…

YOU RUSHED OVER HERE BECAUSE I PANICKED, AND...

IT'S FINE, REALLY! WE WEREN'T BOTHERED BY IT.

IN FACT, I CAN'T BLAME YOU FOR PANICKING IN A SITUATION LIKE THAT.

I'M SORRY, YOU TWO...

I MUST HAVE SCARED YOU, RIGHT?

...

S-
STOP IT,
MOM...

OF
COURSE!

IT'S
GOING
TO TAKE
MORE THAN
THIS TO
KEEP ME
DOWN.

BUT
DON'T
WORRY.

...

RATTLE

TMP

TMP

TMP

FUKO-
SAN!

Oh dear...
YOSUKE-SAN? WHAT ABOUT WORK?
I LEFT EARLY AFTER KOSUKE CALLED ME!
IS THAT SO... I'M SORRY FOR SCARING YOU.
I'M FEELING MUCH BETTER NOW.
ARE YOU FEELING OKAY?!
WAP
HUH? SUBARU-CHAN?! SINCE WHEN HAVE YOU BEEN HERE...?
IT'S BEEN A WHILE, MISTER.
WAY BEFORE YOU STORMED IN HERE, DAD.
REALLY? THAT'S A RELIEF...
RIN-TARO... KUN...?
...YOU STILL HAVEN'T REALIZED THAT RIN-TARO-KUN'S HERE TOO, RIGHT?
S-SORRY, I DIDN'T EVEN REALIZE...
MOOOM!
AND LET ME GUESS...
HONEY, YOU'RE JUST LIKE KOSUKE.
Ha ha ha!

UM...

NICE TO MEET YOU...

...

THIS IS RINTARO TSUMUGI-KUN.

HE'S...

THIS MAY NOT BE THE BEST TIME FOR THIS...

BUT LET ME INTRODUCE YOU TO EACH OTHER.

AND THIS...

...THE PERSON I'M CURRENTLY DATING.

...

...IS MY FATHER.

I'M RINTARO TSUMUGI. AND PLEASE, DON'T BE...

BOW

SORRY FOR JUST BLOWING PAST YOU.

I AM KAORUKO'S FATHER.

I SEE.

SO YOU ARE...

MURMUR

SO HE'S...

...KAO-RUKO-SAN'S FATHER.

NICE TO MEET YOU, TSUMUGI-KUN.

NI~~ GRIN

HE'S GOT SUCH A PEACEFUL SMILE...

I'M REALLY SORRY FOR TODAY, YOU TWO.

WHAT ARE THE OTHERS DOING?

WE DECIDED TO DISBAND FOR THE DAY.

I SEE... I GUESS I'LL HAVE TO APOLOGIZE TO THEM LATER, TOO.

NO NEED FOR THAT. THIS WAS OUT OF YOUR CONTROL, RIGHT?

IF ANYTHING, I'M GLAD YOUR MOTHER IS FEELING BETTER.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT US AND FOCUS ON TAKING CARE OF HER, OKAY?

JUST LET US KNOW ONCE THINGS HAVE CALMED DOWN.

OF COURSE!

YOU... KNOW ABOUT HER MOTHER'S CONDITION, RIGHT?

YEAH... KOSUKE-KUN TOLD ME A WHILE BACK.

HER MOTHER IS ONE THING...

BUT I WAS JUST AS WORRIED ABOUT KAORUKO AND THE REST OF HER FAMILY.

...

I WAS CONCERNED THAT... THIS INCIDENT WAS GOING TO BRING BACK SOME BAD MEMORIES FROM BACK THEN.

...

DURING THE WINTER OF OUR FIRST YEAR IN HIGH SCHOOL... HER MOTHER HAD TO BE HOSPITALIZED MANY TIMES.

IT WAS ALSO AT THAT TIME SHE HAD A LOT OF STRESS AT SCHOOL, TOO... SO IT MUST HAVE BEEN HARD FOR HER.

...SO I GUESS WE WON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THAT.

STILL, SHE'LL SUPPOSEDLY GET DISCHARGED AS SOON AS TOMORROW...

YEAH...

...

THAT ALMOST GAVE ME A HEART ATTACK!

MAA-AAAA-AN...

JUST IMAGINE MY SHOCK WHEN I FIRST HEARD WHAT WAS GOING ON.

THANKS FOR CALLING ME DESPITE ALL THE CHAOS, KOSUKE.

I JUST GOT HOME FROM SCHOOL ONLY TO FIND MOM TOTALLY OUT OF IT AND NEE-CHAN PREPARING TO TAKE HER TO THE HOSPITAL...

HMM?

THANK YOU FOR KEEPING YOUR COOL AND LOOKING AFTER YOUR MOTHER.

I CAN'T IMAGINE HOW WORRIED YOU MUST HAVE BEEN.

AND THE SAME GOES FOR KAORUKO.

TWITCH

HEY, KAORUKO? IS EVERY-THING OKAY?

...

WELL, I THINK I WAS AT LEAST SLIGHTLY MORE COMPOSED THAN WHEN YOU STORMED INTO THE HOSPITAL ROOM, DAD.

OH, THE HONESTY... BUT I CAN'T DISAGREE, EITHER.

THAT'S GOOD...

OH, I'M TOTALLY FINE! WASN'T MY FIRST RODEO, AFTER ALL!

OKAY!

YOU CAN HAVE DINNER WITHOUT ME!

ANYWAY, I GOTTA CLEAN UP MY ROOM A BIT AFTER ALL THE CHAOS I CAUSED EARLIER!

THERE'S NO WAY SHE'D BE FINE.

SHE'S LYING.

ぱた TMP

ぱた TMP

ぱた TMP

ぱた TMP

SHE TRIED TO HIDE IT FROM ME AND PLAY IT OFF, BUT...

WHEN WE WERE WAITING FOR MOM TO GET CHECKED OUT AT THE HOSPITAL...

SWISH

IT WAS CLEAR AS DAY...

THAT SHE WAS TERRIFIED.

RIGHT

I GOTTA LET EVERYONE KNOW.

OH...
9
SO MANY UNREAD MESSAGES...
Waguri-san!!! You okaaay?
Madoka
Don't feel bad because you couldn't make it, okay?
We can just meet up another day, no problemo!
Ayato Yorita
And it's fine even if we missed our chance to the cherry blossoms.
...
PLING
...!
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
WOAH?!
NEE-CHAN?! WHERE ARE YOU GOING?!
KCHAK
KCHAK
SLAM
...

Sorry for texting you this late.
I'm at Erika Station right now.

If you can make the time, I'd
about we meet up for a little

...HUH?

I want to see you.

KAORUKO-SAN?!

WHY ARE YOU HERE...?

I WAS JUST ABOUT TO HEAD OVER TO YOUR PLACE...

ARE YOU... HURT, KAORUKO-SAN?

YOUCH...

WAAH!

BWUMP

HM?

WHY...

DAMN, I COULDN'T EVEN CATCH HER IN TIME...

How lame...

...

I MEAN...

WHY...

DID YOU COME SEE ME?

...YOU'D BE PUTTING ON A BRAVE FACE AGAIN.

PAT

PAT

I WAS WORRIED THAT...

...

SO I WASN'T SURE IF I SHOULD COME OVER, BUT...

THINGS MUST HAVE BEEN TURBULENT FOR YOU TODAY...

THANK YOU.

I AM TOO.

!

Chapter 124: Whining

THANKS FOR TAKING ME HOME!

NO PROBLEM AT ALL.

Can't leave you alone when it's this dark out.

I GUESS I... CRIED A LOT, HUH?

Ha ha ha!

YOU DID, BUT...

I THINK IT WAS NECESSARY FOR YOU TO LET IT ALL OUT.

...!

HA HA...

PRO-BABLY, YEAH...

...!

HEY...

RINTARO-KUN?

...WHO TOLD YOU ABOUT OUR MOTHER'S CONDITION?

WAS IT KOSUKE...

...

OUR MOM...

SHE'S ALWAYS BEEN FRAGILE.

BUT SHE'S BEEN HOSPITALIZED COUNTLESS TIMES UP TO NOW...

AND WHENEVER THAT HAPPENED, IT WAS NEE-CHAN WHO DID EVERYTHING AT HOME

ESPECIALLY SINCE DAD'S ALWAYS COMING HOME LATE BECAUSE OF WORK.

I'VE NEVER SEEN NEE-CHAN BE SAD...OR CRY BEFORE.

I WOULD BE HAPPY IF YOU WOULD...

BE THERE FOR HER WHEN SHE NEEDS IT.

WELL

IF NEE-CHAN EVER NEEDED TO DO THAT

THAT'S WHY

...

YEAH.

A LITTLE BIT... A WHILE AGO.

...IT DID SEEM LIKE YOU WERE ALREADY IN THE KNOW ABOUT HER CONDITION.

WHEN HE ANSWERED YOUR CALL EARLIER TODAY...

I KNEW IT!

...

...

THAT MUST'VE BEEN KOSUKE'S WAY OF LOOKING OUT FOR ME...

HMM... I GUESS I CAN FORGIVE HIM FOR ANSWERING YOUR CALL WITHOUT ASKING ME FIRST!

I THINK...

I WAS LULLED INTO A FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY.

...AND SO WE DIDN'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT HER.

MOM HAS BEEN DOING A LOT BETTER LATELY...

BUT TODAY...

WHEN SHE WAS IN MY ARMS, TOO WEAK TO EVEN STAND...

...OR WHEN WE WERE IN THE HOSPITAL, WAITING FOR HER TO GET BETTER...

I WAS... SCARED.

SO MUCH SO THAT MY HANDS WOULDN'T STOP SHAKING.

I KEPT THINKING ABOUT WHAT WOULD COME NEXT. WHAT IF HER CONDITION ONLY GETS WORSE FROM NOW ON?

WHAT IF SHE GETS DISCHARGED FROM THE HOSPITAL AND THE SAME THING HAPPENS?

BUT WHEN I LOOKED OVER AT KOSUKE NEXT TO ME...

...SEEING HIS ANXIOUS FACE...

...I REALIZED THAT I HAD TO STAY STRONG AND GET A GRIP.

AND SO, I PUT ON A BRAVE FACE.

BUT THEN...
If you can make the time, how about we meet up for a little?
WHEN I SAW YOUR MESSAGE EARLIER...
IT WAS LIKE...
...ALL THE STRENGTH LEFT MY BODY.
AND WHEN I SAW YOUR FACE...
...I WAS JUST SO... RELIEVED, YOU KNOW.

DO YOU RE-MEM-BER?

WHEN AYU AND THE OTHERS FOUND OUT ABOUT US DATING...

YOU TOLD ME...

LET ME HELP...

...CARRY YOUR BURDEN.

AND...

JUST THOSE WORDS ALONE...

...MADE ME FEEL LIKE EVERYTHING WAS GOING TO BE OKAY.

SO... THANK YOU, RINTARO-KUN.

I CAN WHINE AND COMPLAIN ABOUT THINGS LIKE I AM NOW.

...SIMPLY HAVING SOMEONE WHO'S WILLING TO LISTEN TO YOUR WHIN-ING...

I NEVER KNEW THAT...

...WOULD FEEL THIS REASSURING.

OH... WE'RE ALREADY BACK AT MY PLACE.

...

PULL

!

HM? RINTARO-KUN?

WHAT'S WRONG?

...OR WHEN YOU FEEL LIKE YOU CAN'T KEEP GOING ANYMORE...

IF YOU NEED SOMEONE TO TALK TO OR LISTEN TO YOUR COM-PLAINING...

JUST LET ME KNOW.

I'LL BE THERE IN A FLASH.

...!

THANK... YOU...

Y- YEAH...

ALL RIGHT... SEE YOU.

Y- YEAH! NIGHT!

WOW, THAT SURPRISED ME...

?!

WONK

I JUST HAD TO MESS UP

AND NEAR HER FACE, TOO...!

GAA-AAAA-AAH...!

Wh-What's his deal...?

AND WHEN I SAW YOUR FACE...

SAW YOUR MESSAGE EARLIER...

I WAS

I THINK...

CAN I... BECOME THAT SORT OF HAVEN FOR HER?

I WANT HER TO BE ABLE TO WHINE AND COMPLAIN AS MUCH AS SHE WANTS. AT LEAST WHEN I'M WITH HER. I WANT TO BE THAT PERSON FOR HER.

I JUST GOT TOO EXCITED...

WHEN SHE TOLD ME HOW SHE FELT.

I'M LIKE A KID GETTING PRAISED

DANGIT...

BUT...

I'M GLAD I COULD BE THERE FOR HER...

WHEN SHE NEEDED IT.

I WANT HER TO...

...RELY ON ME EVEN MORE.

HEY, MOM!

ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE OKAY?

YOU'RE NOT PUSHING YOURSELF, RIGHT?

GOSH... I'M FINE, REALLY.

EVEN THE DOCTORS SAID THERE WAS NO REASON TO WORRY ANYMORE.

THAT'S WHY THEY LET ME GO HOME FROM THE HOSPITAL, REMEMBER?

And you stop turning around so much or you'll get motion sick!

Okaaay!

PHEW

...THAT'S GOOD!

IT'S FINE, IT'S FINE!

DIDN'T YOU MAKE PLANS TO WATCH THE CHERRY BLOSSOMS WITH EVERY-ONE...?

!

OH, I ALMOST FORGOT. KAORUKO?

!

HEY! YOU'RE TRYING TO APOLOGIZE AGAIN!

STILL, I'M SO—

I SEE...

WE AGREED TO MEET UP AGAIN SOON IF OUR SCHEDULES MAKE IT POSSIBLE.

WE MIGHT'VE MISSED OUR CHANCE, BUT IT'S NOT THAT BIG OF A DEAL!

AND I DON'T WANT YOU TO APOLOGIZE ANYMORE.

IT WASN'T YOUR FAULT, MOM.

SO I'LL TELL YOU RIGHT NOW...

EVERY-THING IS FINE...

...OKAY, MOM?

UNDER-
STOOD.

...I
SEE.

I
ACTUALLY
HAVE AN
IDEA IN
REGARDS
TO THAT.

THOUGH...

IT
SURE HAS
GOTTEN
WARMER
LATELY...

COME
ON IN!

We're
back!

THANKS
FOR
HAVING
US!

WE'RE
HOME!

AND IT
WAS FUN,
TOO.

NOW WE
HAVE TO MAKE
GOOD USE OF
INGREDIENTS
WE BOUGHT!

Thanks!

NOT TO
MENTION,
WE WERE THE
ONES WHO
ASKED TO
HANDLE THE
SHOPPING!

Oh, it
was no
biggie!

PLUS, YOU
HANDLED
ALL THE
SHOPPING,
TOO.

IT'S
TOTALLY FINE!
YOU'RE OUR
GUESTS,
AFTER ALL!

UM,
ARE YOU
SURE ABOUT
PAYING
FOR ALL OF
US?

...SO GO AND HAVE FUN, EVERYONE!

WE FINISHED PREPARING EVERY-THING...

COOKING TIME!

WOOO! TAKOYAKI PARTY!

SHO GOOD!

I COULD EAT THIS FOR-EVER!

THAT'S KAORUKO'S LITTLE BRO FOR YOU...

I hear that a lot from her.

SHOHEI, MIND GRABBING A DRINK FOR ME?

HM? WHIFF WHONE?

Nasty bas-tard

SWALLOW YOUR DAMN FOOD FIRST.

HEY, HOSHINA-SAN, WOULD YOU LIKE TO TRY YOUR HAND AT MAKING TAKOYAKI, TOO?

HUH? I... I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN DO IT WELL ENOUGH...

I'LL TEACH YOU HOW TO DO IT, SO NO WORRIES.

WHICH INGREDIENT ARE WE DOING NEXT?

THE POLLOCK ROE.

This one!

HEE HEE...

THAT'S TRUE.

I'M GLAD TO SEE THEY'RE ENJOYING THEMSELVES.

Chapter 125: Takoyaki Party

REMIND ME AGAIN...

IT WAS NEXT WEEK, RIGHT?

MEETING UP AT WAGURI-SAN'S PLACE TO EAT TA-KOYAKI, I MEAN.

YUP.

APPARENTLY, IT WAS HER MOTHER WHO WANTED TO INVITE US, TOO.

YOU THINK SHE'S FEELING BETTER ALREADY?

SEEMS LIKE IT. IT'S BEEN TWO WEEKS SINCE HER HOSPITAL STAY.

ACCORDING TO KAORUKO-SAN, SHE'S RECOVERED JUST FINE.

YEAH? THAT'S GREAT TO HEAR.

MAN... HEARING ABOUT HER MOTHER THAT DAY GAVE ME A HEART ATTACK...

DUDE...

LA LA LA! I CAN'T HEAR YOU!

AND THE MID-TERMS.

THE TAKOYAKI PARTY AND... THE SPORTS FESTIVAL!

ABSOLUTELY! NOW WE GOT TWO THINGS TO LOOK FORWARD TO THIS MONTH!

WE SHOULD MAKE THE BEST OUT OF IT AND KEEP AN EMPTY STOMACH FOR THE TAKOYAKI.

BUT SINCE SHE'S GONE OUT OF HER WAY TO INVITE US...

...

CHATTER

CHATTER

WE HAVEN'T HAD TIME TO MEET UP SINCE THEN...

...WOULD FEEL THIS REASSURING.

I WAS JUST SO SCARED

...!

...BUT I HOPE SHE'S DOING FINE.

HA HA HA!

もぐ
MUNCH

CHECK OUT KAORUKO! SHE'S LOOKING LIKE A SQUIRREL!

I STUFFED MY CHEEKS TOO MUCH...!

もぐ
MUNCH

HER APPETITE'S THE SAME AS ALWAYS, AT LEAST.

Good, good...

Hi
SQUISH

SEE? SEE? HER CHEEKS ARE ROUND LIKE TAKO-YAKI!

KEEP THAT UP AND SHE'S GONNA SHOOT THOSE AT US LIKE BULLETS!

MHMPH...

OH, I'M GETTING PLENTY.

ARE YOU GETTING ENOUGH TO EAT, RINTARO-KUN?

THESE ARE SO TASTY!

GULP

Like a chef...

This is pretty fun...

TWIRL

TWIRL

ABSOLUTE FOCUS.

JUST LOOK AT HOSHINA-SAN GO. SHE'S LIKE A WELL-OILED MACHINE.

WHAT?! I LOOKED AWAY FOR A SECOND AND SHE'S PUMPING THEM OUT LIKE THAT?!

WE HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO SEE EACH OTHER IN A WHILE, AFTER ALL...

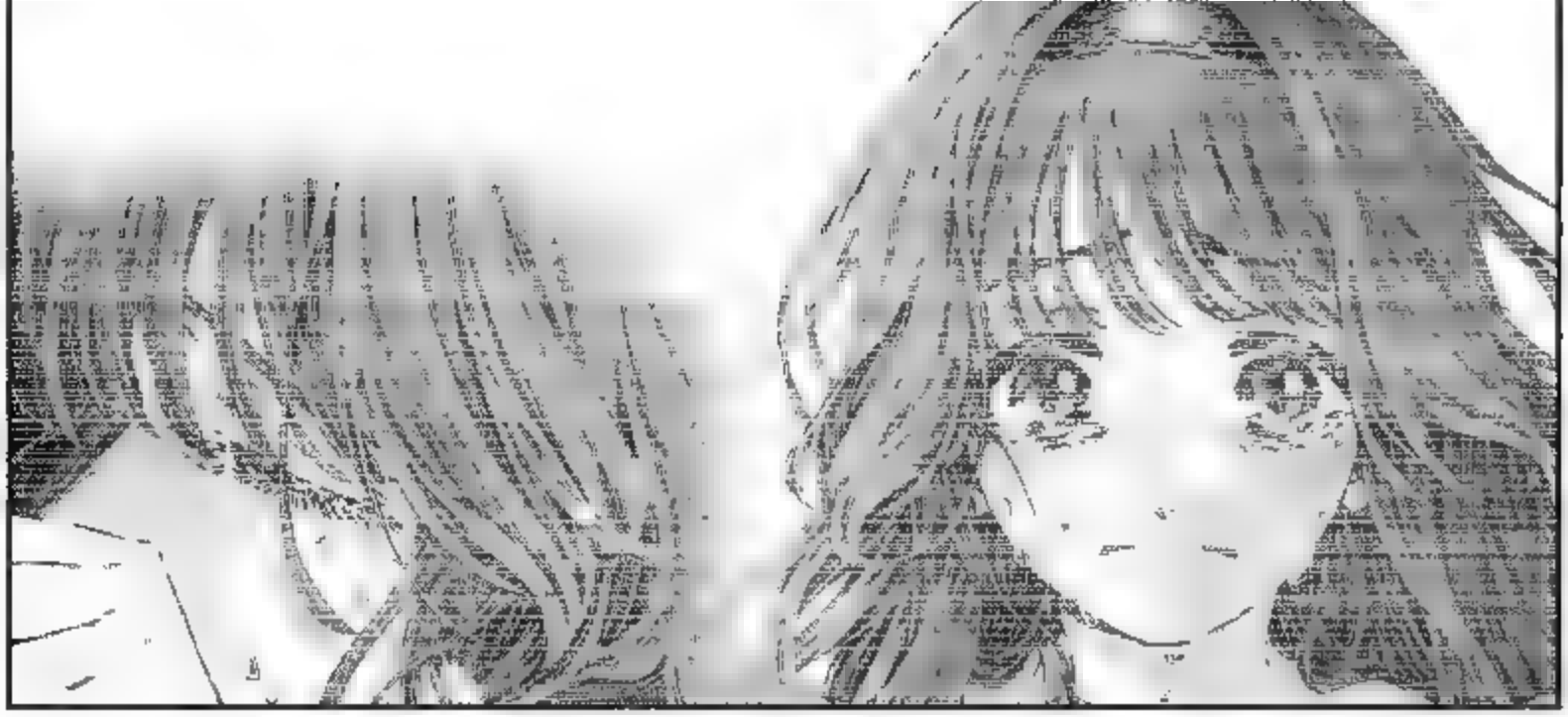
I'M GLAD THAT EVERYONE IS HAVING FUN.

ARE YOU ENJOYING YOURSELF?

AND WHAT ABOUT YOU?

YUP!

I'M HAVING A BLAST!



I REALLY
LOVE HER
SMILE
MORE THAN
ANYTHING.

DAD! DECIDE FOR US!

...

WHICH INGREDIENTS ARE WE USING NEXT, GUYS?!

HUH? DO YOU REALLY WANT ME TO...?

'COURSE! AND IT'LL BE SUPER GOOD, PROMISE!

USAMI-SAN'S INSANELY GOOD AT MAKING THE TAKOYAKI!

Thanks for your order!

THEN... COULD I ASK FOR SOME WITH KIMCHI?

ROGER THAT! JUST LEAVE IT TO US!

HERE, IF YOU'D LIKE...

WE HAVE SOME WITH POLLACK ROE LEFT!

OH DEAR, THANK YOU.

BUT THANK YOU FOR ASKING.

YES! PERFECTLY FINE!

IF I MAY... ARE YOU FEELING BETTER NOW?

THAT'S GREAT TO HEAR!

ISN'T THAT RIGHT, HONEY?

OH, I DON'T MIND. I WAS HAPPY THAT HE WENT OUT OF HIS WAY TO TALK TO US, AND I DON'T DISLIKE A BIT OF TUMULT MYSELF.

SORRY IF WE'RE BEING TOO LOUD. I KNOW USAMI CAN BE A BIT PUSHY SOMETIMES, SO I HOPE HE DIDN'T BOTHER YOU TOO MUCH.

IF ANY-THING, WE SHOULD BE THANKING YOU.

LETTING US MEET UP HERE...

And even paying for the food.

ABSOLUTELY. KOSUKE HAS FIT IN PERFECTLY, TOO.

BE SURE TO EAT AS MUCH AS YOU'D LIKE. YOU DIDN'T GET TO ENJOY THE CHERRY BLOSSOM VIEWING AFTER ALL.

IS THAT SO? THANK YOU.

NO, YOU DON'T HAVE TO FEEL BAD ABOUT THAT. IT WASN'T YOUR FAULT, AFTER ALL.

WE'RE GLAD TO HAVE HIM AROUND!

BUT NOW, HE MUST BE FEELING LIKE HE SUDDENLY HAS THREE NEW OLDER BROTHERS.

I COULD TELL HOW ATTACHED HE WAS TO TSUMUGI-KUN...

AND HE EVEN INVITED US TO PLAY STREET BASKETBALL LATER.

TRUE!

YUP! SO IF YOU'D LIKE TO TRY SOME OTHER TAKOYAKI, JUST LET US KNOW!

PLUS, TODAY HAS BEEN PLENTY OF FUN ALREADY.

...

Thank you.

You're welcome!

I DON'T WANT YOU TO APOLOGIZE ANYMORE.

NO, YOU DON'T HAVE TO FEEL BAD ABOUT THAT.

!

...THE FIRST TIME KAORUKO BROUGHT OVER A GROUP OF BOYS LIKE THIS, BUT...

THIS IS...

...YET POLITE AND KIND-HEARTED...

THEY'RE YOUNG AND ENERGETIC...

THAT'S VERY TRUE.

THEY'RE A WONDERFUL BUNCH.

...AND THAT'S HOW SHE GOT TO KNOW ALL OF THEM.

APPARENTLY, THEY WERE ALL ORIGINALLY TSUMUGI-KUN'S FRIENDS...

THIS IS RINTARO TSUMUGI-KUN.

HE'S...

...THE PERSON I'M CURRENTLY DATING.

...

NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT!

GUYS! WE'RE ALMOST OUT OF JUICE!

OH!

THOUGH, WHILE I'M AT IT...

...

NO, IT'S OKAY! WE SHOULD HANDLE THAT OURSELVES...

IT'S FINE. I WAS FEELING FULL EITHER WAY, SO I MIGHT AS WELL TAKE A LITTLE WALK.

THEN WHY DON'T I GO BUY SOME MORE.

HUH?!

OH, UH, SURE...

TSUMUGI-KUN, WOULD YOU MIND ACCOMPANYING ME?

JUST WHAT WILL THEY BE TALKING ABOUT YOU THINK?

にゃっ SLIDE

AH...

BOYFRIEND AND FATHER-IN-LAW...

They're not wasting a second to tease her...

?

MADOKA?! AND USAMI-KUN, TOO?!

Hey!

Family Store

A- ACTUALLY, LET ME CARRY THE BASKET!

ARE YOU SURE? THANK YOU.

NOW, WHERE'S THAT JUICE...

...

That's true.

I remember them drinking all sorts of flavors. We should buy a few different ones.

I'M SO NERVOUS I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO TALK ABOUT...!

...WE ONLY REALLY WENT INTO RANDOM CHIT-CHAT, BUT...

ON OUR WAY HERE...

I should be around 6'3" right now.

Oh, wow!

I keep being surprised at your height. How tall are you?

I... I WONDER HOW HE FEELS ABOUT ME DATING HIS DAUGHTER.

I WAS NERVOUS WHEN I MET KAORUKO-SAN'S MOTHER, BUT THIS IS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT.

ERM, WELL... WE MET LAST APRIL... WHEN WE WERE STILL IN OUR SECOND YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL.

BUT, UM...

SAY, HOW DID YOU AND KAORUKO GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER?

HUH?!

WOULD HE HAVE TRIED TO KEEP ME AWAY FROM HER IF I STILL HAD MY BLOND HAIR...?

...

AND I HAD SIMPLY FORGOTTEN ABOUT THAT.

WE'D ACTUALLY MET BEFORE THAT DURING THE WINTER OF OUR FIRST YEAR...

YOU SEE...

KAORUKO TOLD ME ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED THEN.

SO IT WAS YOU...

...WHO HELPED HER, WASN'T IT?